

Some Afterthoughts

Michael E. Stone

I made many pages of notes during this meeting, but I fear they will not help me greatly in the task of giving this retrospective overview. I trust that some of the presenters, whose work I do not discuss in detail, will forgive me. In the framework of the time and space given, and due to the diversity of the subjects discussed, I found it impossible to deal with them all and I have given free reign to my own proclivities. “The Apocalyptic Worldview” is a challenging topic and “The Seleucid and Hasmonean Periods” is a difficult brief. Our consideration starts in the obscurity of the Seleucid period and gradually emerges into light with the Hasmoneans.

One issue that came up repeatedly during these past days is that of the definition of “apocalyptic worldview”. Lester Grabbe raised problems with the generally accepted definitions, particularly in that they do not lay enough stress on revelation of knowledge and they perpetuate the standard assumption of apocalyptic as an outcome of crisis. Particularly in the course of the discussions, previously neat categories became ragged, or at least considerably nuanced; yet no consensus about a re-definition was reached.¹

What came through to me most clearly as I review the past days’ discussion was an *aporia* as to what apocalyptic is and what a worldview is (the latter a subject

¹ For the standard current view, see John J. Collins (1979), “Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14 (Chico, CA: Society of Biblical Literature), 1-20.

interestingly discussed by Anatheia Portier-Young). Only if “apocalyptic worldview” is understood can the question of the relationship between apocalypticism and the Maccabean revolt, for example, be considered sensibly (Oegema). Then, the question about the type of relationship between the two, which lurks in the background of much of the discussion, can be considered. Pierluigi Piovanelli in his paper, considering the later apocalypses of the first century CE, argued that they reflect popular feeling and not just the ideas of extremist groups. I would add the broad spread of apocalypses in the languages of the Jews of the period, including Greek, the diversity implied by the existence not just of apocalypses from the Land of Israel but also from the diaspora, the Jewish translations of Aramaic texts into Greek, and other features, buttress this view. It is my particular brief, however, to concentrate on the short papers.

Vincente Dobroruka raised two issues that are, once more, very timely. First, he highlights the role played by ancient mythological patterning in apocalyptic historical structures. Second, he returns energetically to the more specific matter of Persian influence on Second Temple Judaism. In that, he draws to our attention once more a series of problems that were last considered deeply by the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* a century ago. In the background of the issue of Persian influence lie weighty specific issues. These include:

(1) the interpretation of Daniel 2 and 7, the sequence of metals and kingdoms, and the highly influential four metals series;

| (2) the question [of](#) Greek influence on Jewish material in the Second Temple period, a subject sadly neglected of late;

| (3) the question [of](#) Iranian influence on Greek culture from the fifth century on and

thus, not only direct Iranian influence on Second Temple Judaism, but also the transmission to it of Iranian patterns that the Greeks had absorbed in earlier centuries.

There is no doubt that Daniel is drawing on old traditions. The series of gold, silver, bronze, and iron must be related to the spread of ironwork in the early first millennium BCE. In Daniel, clearly, the metals are related to a four kingdoms pattern that is repeated twice in chaps. 2 and 7. Swain, years ago, suggested that the four metals connection was Persian, and old, with one striking detail shared by the *Zand i Vohuman Yasn* and Daniel 7.² That a mixed fourth metal, Daniel calls it iron mixed with clay, occurs in both sources is indeed striking and Dobroruka rightly stresses this anew. Admittedly, in Iranian sources, this is only attested in the Pahlavi books, edited towards the end of the first millennium CE, but arguments can be adduced to show it may be old. Its adoption by Daniel, we may remark, **may** **might** in part be connected with the love of such numerical patterns in apocalyptic historiography. Other examples of this are the 70 years, 7 weeks, etc. and also the divisions of the historical age into 12 and even 10 parts.³

The occurrence in *Zand I Vohuman Yasn* is striking, since both there and in Daniel 7 we have mixed iron in one form or another. A relationship of some sort seems rather plausible. The problem is exactly that which Vincente Dobroruka pointed

² J.W. Swain (1940), "The Theory of Four Monarchies - Opposition History Under the Roman Empire," *CP*, 25, 1-21.

³ Michael E. Stone (2011), *Ancient Judaism: New Visions and Views* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 59-89.

out: can we assume that there was an early form of this Pahlavi work? I might add another problem as well, that, even if there was such an ancient work, we are fairly ignorant about what Iranian religion was in the areas of the Parthian empire close to the land of Israel, but we can be sure it was not identical with Zoroastrianism as we know it from the Avesta and the Pahlavi books, and we have no idea how such a notion might have reached Daniel. Moreover, even if the *Zand I Vohuman Yasn* contains ancient traditions, why assume that they are older than Daniel and that they did not derive from it?

Here I will not summarize arguments found *in extenso* in Dobroruka's paper. Yet, the questions he implies about [the](#) roles of Iran, Greek and Hellenistic culture, literature, and religion in Hellenized Palestine are extremely weighty and this subject, including its implications for Jewish and Hellenistic relations, has been neglected in recent years.

Årstein Justnes talked most interestingly about the expansion of the corpus of Danielic literature. This brings out strikingly the prominence of Daniel, actually an extra-biblical figure (despite Ezek 14:14, 20, 28:3 דניאל), as a pseudepigraphic author. The picture gained from the Enochic corpus, of varied writings centred around one figure, is also to be found in the Daniel literature. Intriguingly, both these corpora are rather early and the existence of the Daniel corpus undermines the apparent uniqueness of the Enochic. In his critique of Årstein Justnes's remarks, Joseph Angel argues that **4Q246** is undated, and he doubts the linguistic similarities between it and Daniel. I would myself urge careful consideration of the complexity of Danielic tradition and re-assessment of the role of canonical Daniel, a set of problems made evident decades ago by the Qumran Nabonidus document. What emerges, once more, is the complexity of

the apocalyptic and associated traditions from early in the Second Temple period.

This is a very timely caution.

Guided by my own special interests, let me continue. Daniel Machiela dealt again with the Aramaic corpus from Qumran.⁴ Correctly, he observes that the very fact of books being in Aramaic does not guarantee any particular coherence of content between them. He does remark, following Florentino García Martínez, that they are of a predominantly “apocalyptic character.” He makes the appropriate remarks on this concentration of Aramaic texts, earlier, on the whole, than Hebrew extra-biblical documents, though this is far from a hard and fast rule. He argues that the use of Aramaic diminished as the result of a shift to Hebrew, ideologically motivated, in the Hasmonean period.

I find little to disagree with here, but have a certain *caveat* to express. It is indeed striking that a large number of Aramaic texts are rather early, and it is equally striking that of this early Aramaic corpus, the major part has apocalyptic tendencies (disregarding *pro tem* our earlier remarks on the definitional problem, though it plagues Machiela too). If the Qumran find reflects a real shift in the use of the languages, then we must hedge our statements with the following explicitly conscious statement. The corpus we have may be either (or both) ideologically tendentious or purely a result of archaeological chance. After all the Chronicler’s work, Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, indeed all the post-exilic biblical literature⁵ is in Hebrew and there is no reason to think that

⁴See Katell Berthelot, and Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra (eds.) (2010), *Aramaica Qumranica: Proceedings of the Conference on the Aramaic Texts from Qumran in Aix-en-Provence, 30 June-2 July 2008* (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah, 94; Leiden, Boston: Brill).

⁵Except Persian official documents included in Ezra.

Hebrew, which was anyway the language of the national tradition, had disappeared or fallen into desuetude.

The issue of the languages used by the Jews in Judea at various times and the relationship between them needs further clarification, but it is evident that it was not an either/or situation, but a question of who used which of the two languages, when, and in which context. Machiela does not raise the issue of bi-lingualism. This said, the idea that the increased number of Hebrew compositions was a result of the events of the day (whether ideologically explicit or not) is a reasonable hypothesis at the present stage of knowledge.

The shared features of the early texts may perhaps be better viewed from the perspective of their period of composition than of their language. As well, the paucity of the finds of Hebrew apocalypses later on might be regarded as correlated with the developing ideology of the Qumran,⁶ or even of the broader Essene “wing” of Judaism. It is the absence of Hebrew apocalypses, not the presence of Aramaic ones that is striking. In conclusion, the papers were all worthy of consideration and through that we may highlight unclear definitions and hidden assumptions, which to me was the chief achievement of the conference, can only benefit the participants and the field in general.

Michael E. Stone

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

⁶Observe Shmaryahu Talmon’s view that the Qumran sect regarded itself as still living in the biblical period: “The ‘Dead Sea Scrolls’ Or ‘the Community of the Renewed Covenant’?” [TITLE OF BOOK NEEDED](#) ed. W. G. Dever, and J. E. Wright, Atlanta: GA: Scholars Press, 1997.

[Since the above was written, I have had occasion to read, Jason M. Silverman (2012), *Persepolis and Jerusalem: Iranian Influence on the Apocalyptic Hermeneutic* (London: T&T Clark). It is not certain to me that Dr. Silverman has *proved* his case, but his book is timely and will combine with Vincente's work to return the question of Iranian influence to the discussion. Qumran will have to be included in any future discussion of this.]